



# Moonee Valley Animal Hospital

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## FELINE AIDS (FIV)

Feline AIDS is a very serious and unfortunately **common disease of cats**. It is caused by infection with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV).

Healthy cats usually become infected when a cat carrying FIV bites them during a cat fight.

Once infected, the cat usually shows no symptoms for many years as the FIV virus slowly attacks and weakens the immune system. Eventually the immune system is unable to fight off other infections and illnesses and the cat becomes sick. When the immune system is severely weakened by the FIV virus and the cat becomes sick, the cat is then said to have the Feline AIDS disease (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)

Feline AIDS is eventually fatal. **There is no treatment or cure.**

Feline AIDS infection is most common in stray and feral cats, but we also see it very commonly in pet cats. A recent study of cats in the eastern states of Australia indicates that around 25% of stray cats and 16% of pet cats with outside access are infected with the disease.

**Any cat that goes outside is at risk** of being bitten and contracting the disease from an infected cat.

Fortunately **we now have a vaccination for FIV** which can help to **protect your cat** against this disease.

The vaccination starts off with a primary course of 3 injections, given 2-4wks apart. An annual booster injection is then given to maintain the cat's immunity, usually at the same time as the cat's annual health check-up and booster F3 vaccination.

Before the 1<sup>st</sup> FIV vaccination is given, a simple blood test must be done to ensure that your cat has not already been infected with the disease. This test may be done in the clinic with a "Snap" test or by submitting a blood sample to an external laboratory for detection of the viral DNA. Which test is most appropriate will depend on your cat's prior vaccination and fighting history. Your vet will advise you further. If the blood test is negative, then the 1<sup>st</sup> FIV vaccination can be given.

Kittens starting their primary FIV vaccination course do not require the FIV blood test prior to their first vaccination.

The FIV vaccine confers a type of immunity known as Cell Mediated Immunity. For this reason it is vitally important that the annual boosters are given on time. Overdue booster vaccinations may result in the primary course of vaccinations needing to be given all over again.

**Please talk to a staff member if you have any questions about FIV, or would like to vaccinate your pet; we'll be more than happy to help.**

\*\*FIV and Feline AIDS are different to the human disease, HIV and Human AIDS. They are quite similar viruses in their effect on the body, but neither is transmissible between people and cats.